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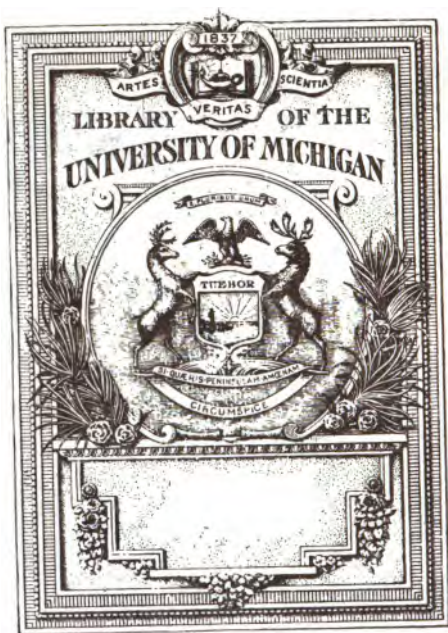
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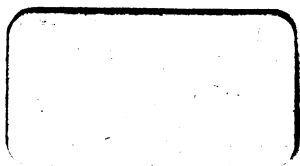
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THE GIFT OF  
Prof. F. N. Scott



F28

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1905



SONGS ABOUT LIFE  
LOVE AND DEATH  
BY ANNE REEVE ALDRICH



CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS  
NEW YORK MDCCCXVIII

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## NOTE

*Miss Aldrich had arranged for the publication of the present collection of her maturer poems before the beginning of an illness that terminated fatally June twenty-eighth last. With a single exception the volume remains as she left it in her publishers' hands. This is the poem entitled "Death at Daybreak," dictated during her illness when she was too weak to hold the pen, and not long before she herself died—at the age of twenty-six—just before dawn. The title of the volume is her own, though she had expressed herself not wholly satisfied with it and had suggested another. It has been retained, however, not only because it was hers, but because of its evident felicity in expressing the essential unity of what really is a cycle of spiritually connected lyrics rather than a collection of unrelated poems. As she said, in speaking of them, they are "chiefly in a minor key," and, whatever their special subjects, are expressions of closely allied moods.*

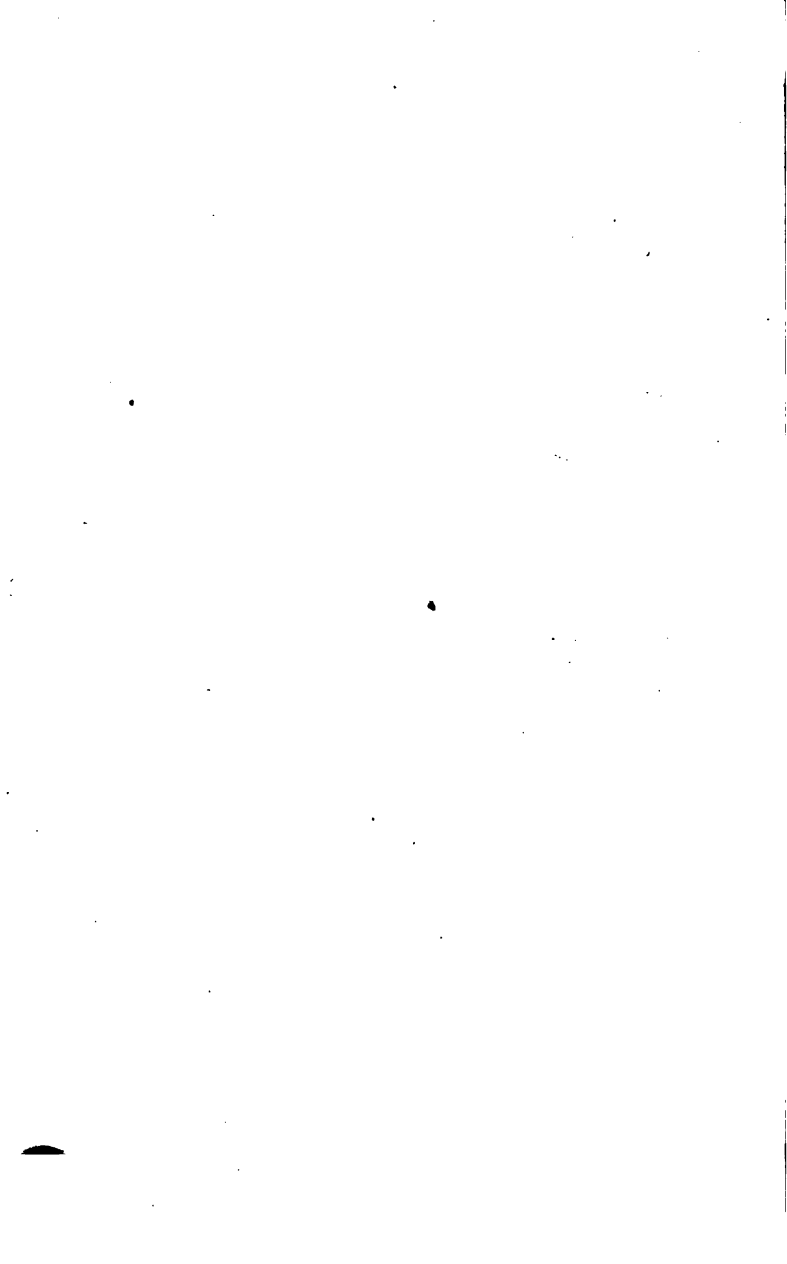
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Prof. Scott

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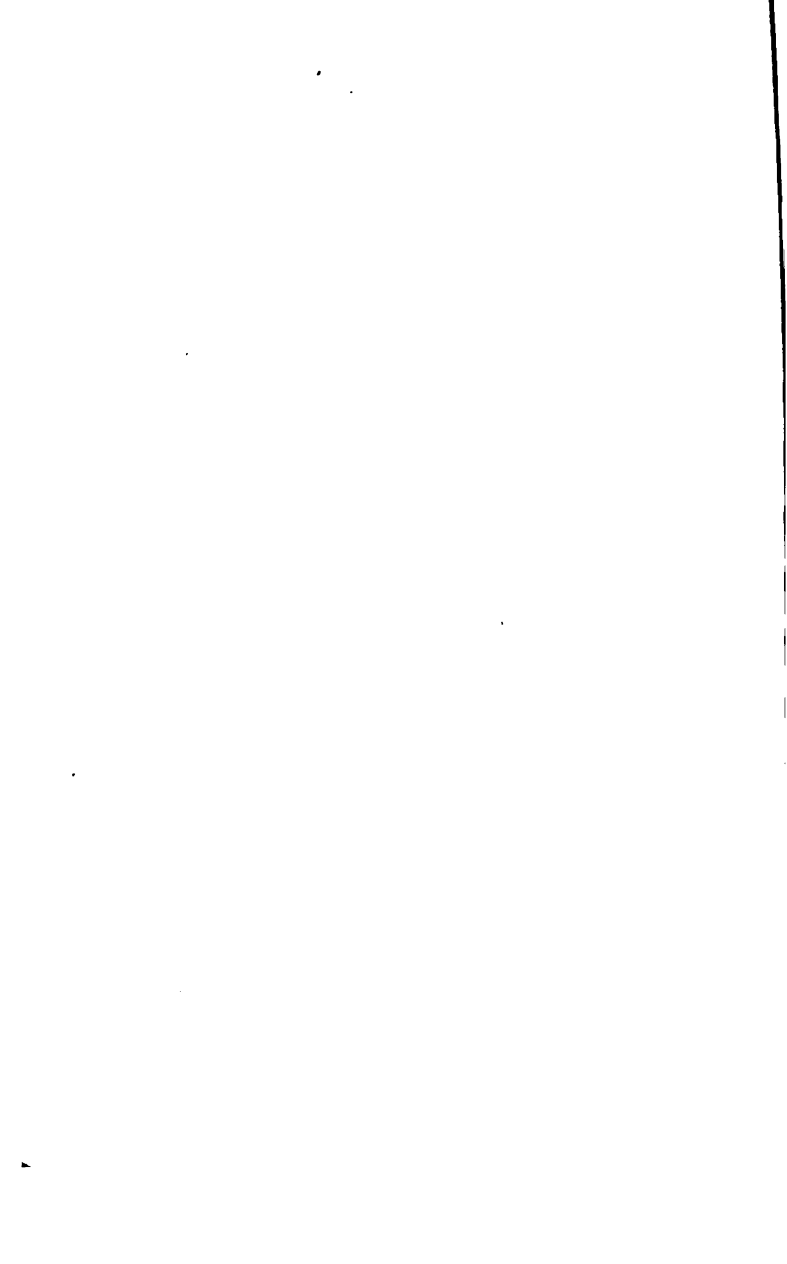
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**SONGS ABOUT LIFE  
LOVE AND DEATH**



## A SONG ABOUT SINGING

O nightingale, the poet's bird,  
A kinsman dear thou art,  
Who never sings so well as when  
The rose-thorns bruise his heart.

But since thy agony can make  
A listening world so blest,  
Be sure it cares but little for  
Thy wounded, bleeding breast!

## MY GUERDON

I stood where gifts were showered on men from  
Heaven,

And some had honors and the joy thereof;  
And some received with solemn, radiant faces  
The gift of love.

The green I saw of bay-leaves, and of laurel,  
Of gold the gleam.

A voice spoke to me, standing empty-handed,  
"For thee—a dream."

Forbear to pity, ye who richly laden

Forth from the place of Heaven's bounty went;  
Who marvel that I smile, my hands still empty—  
I am content.

Ye cannot guess how dowered beyond the measure  
Of your receiving to myself I seem.

Lonely and cold, I yet pass on enraptured—  
I have my dream.



## MUSIC OF HUNGARY

(A ANTON DVOŘÁK)

My body answers you, my blood  
Leaps at your maddening, piercing call.  
The fierce notes startle, and the veil  
Of this dull present seems to fall.

My soul responds to that long cry ;  
It wants its country, Hungary !

Not mine by birth. Yet have I not  
Some strain of that old Magyar race ?  
Else why the secret stir of sense  
At sight of swarthy Tzigane face,  
That warns me : "Lo, thy kinsmen nigh."  
All 's dear that tastes of Hungary.

Once more, O let me hear once more  
The passion and barbaric rage!  
Let me forget my exile here  
In this mild land, in this mild age;  
Once more that unrestrained wild cry  
That takes me to my Hungary!

They listen with approving smile,  
But I, O God, I want my home!  
I want the Tzigane tongue, the dance,  
The nights in tents, the days to roam.  
O music, O fierce life and free,  
God made my soul for Hungary!

## A SUMMER MORNING

The city night holds no such ghastly hour  
As that of city dawn, when in the trees  
The sparrows quarrel, and the pallid light  
Is ushered in by waves of fetid breeze.

The ghosts that filled a burning, sleepless night  
Draw closer in this livid birth of day,  
To fix their dreadful faces on my mind  
Before the August sun melts them away.

With brain exhausted and with body worn,  
And soul too dulled by pain to frame a prayer,  
I vaguely long for some fresh, dewy land,  
Yet, ah, my ghosts would follow even there!

Beneath my window sleep the long gray streets,  
Still in the heated heaven shines one star.  
The ashen light grows whiter in its strength,  
And, though still haunted, O, to be afar,

Where morning mists are brooding on some lake,  
Or on a cool and silvered stretch of lawn!  
—An outcast in the street below lifts up her face,  
The incarnation of this city dawn.

## TO A NIGHTINGALE

Sing for me, O my friend,  
My music will not come,  
For Love that urges thee to sing  
Has made me dumb.

Sing for us both, O friend,  
How heavenly-sweet this night,  
How white the land beneath the moon,  
How deep, Delight!

Sing for me, O my friend.  
Thy song from branch above  
Shall add one rapture more to night,  
One more to Love!

## A YEAR

O the brown dead sedge, and the inlet's ice,  
And the leaning sky's chill gray,  
And on sea and shore the Autumn,  
And in heart and soul the May!

O the green marsh-grass, and the inlet's blue,  
And the sky a turquoise scroll,  
And on sea and shore the Summer,  
And Autumn in heart and soul!

## A WAYSIDE CALVARY

Its shadow makes a sheltered place  
All through the burning summer day.  
There at the foot, secure from sun,  
The ragged little children play.

And in the winter huddled birds  
Take refuge from the windward side,  
When driving snows make bleak the plain,  
And herald holy Christmas-tide.

The bleeding Christ that hangs above  
To bid the passer stop and pray,  
Smiles through his bitter agony  
On such small, tender things as they!

## THE PRAYER OF DOLORES

MADRID, 1888

Beneath the grass, I hear them say,  
Live loathsome things that hate the day,—  
Strange crawling shapes with blinded eyes,  
Whose very image terrifies.  
I dread not these: make deep my bed  
With good black mold round heart and head.  
But oh! the fear a Thought may creep  
Down from the world to where I sleep,  
Pierce through the earth to heart and brain  
And coil there, in its home again!  
Father, thou hast the good God's ear,—  
And when priests speak He bends to hear,—  
Say, "Lord, this woman of Madrid  
Begs, when herself in earth is hid,



Her soul's guilt paid for, grain by grain,  
In throes of purgatorial pain,  
That Thou her soul wouldst clean destroy;  
She hath no wish for heavenly joy,  
But just to be dissolved to Naught,  
Beyond the reach of any thought.  
Some sinners dare to beg for bliss,  
I know my place, and ask but this:  
That He, who made will then unmake  
My soul, for His sweet mercy's sake!"

## AFTER

Well, my heart, we have been happy ;  
Let us snatch that from the wreck of things.  
But when the forest is choked with ashes,  
While still the flame round its old nest flashes,  
'T is a brave bird sits on a charred limb and sings !

Well, my heart, we have been happy ;  
Doubtless we find another nest.  
But, though it be softer, one still remembers,  
And dearer the ruin of blackened embers  
Than all the peace of a later rest.

## MY PSALM OF THANKSGIVING

That I am one day nearer to the rest  
Of my small, narrow bed beneath the sod,  
Where I shall sleep, haply forgetting much,  
I thank Thee, God.

That though the thorns are keen and thickly set  
Along the path remaining to be trod,  
My feet are travel-hardened to their wounds,  
I thank Thee, God.

That in the future there can be for me  
No bitterer scourgings of Thy heavy rod  
Than I have borne with patience in the past,  
I thank Thee, God.

That this sad road at least must have an end  
Toward which we weary travelers ceaseless plod,—  
Oh, most of all, that this sad road must end,—  
I thank Thee, God!

## IN MEMORY OF FATHER DAMIEN

More royal than the miniver of kings

The robe of tortured flesh that clothed his soul,—  
The martyr, reaching out an eager hand  
To clasp the cup of bitterness and dole.

And lo! we see through tears the signs divine

Of sainthood that the ancient tales repeat:  
Stigmata were the loathsome ulcer-wounds  
Disease had marked in holy hands and feet!

## MY PERSIAN PRAYER-RUG

Made smooth some centuries ago  
By praying Eastern devotees,  
Blurred by those dusky naked feet,  
And somewhat worn by shuffling knees,  
In Ispahan,

It lies upon my modern floor,  
And no one prays there any more.  
It never felt the worldly tread  
Of smart *bottines*, high-heeled and red,  
In Ispahan.

And no one prays there now, I said ?  
Ah well, that was a hasty word.  
Once, with my face upon its woof,  
A fiercer prayer it never heard  
In Ispahan.

But still I live who prayed that night  
That death might come ere came the light.  
Did any soul in black despair  
Breathe, kneeling here, that reckless prayer  
In Ispahan?

Perhaps. I trust that Heaven lent  
A kinder ear than late to me,  
If some brown ancient, weeping, begged  
To have his suffering soul set free  
In Ispahan.

I fancy I shall like to meet  
The dead who prayed here, and whose feet  
Once made this rich old carpet frayed.  
Peace to your souls, my friends, who prayed  
In Ispahan!

## A STUDY

First, Color: hangings of the vital hue  
Of life-blood, soft to sight the warm, wet red,  
Broidered with lordly forms in varied silks  
And curiously wrought with golden thread;  
The warmth of living color deep and bright  
To sweetly satisfy the hungry sight.

Next, Fragrance: incense-odors of the East  
Mixed with these roses dying at our feet,  
And irritating scent of iris-flowers,  
And heliotropes' soft smell, voluptuous-sweet,  
Mixed with some poppies' bitter, drowsy breath  
To hint that Pleasure falls asleep in Death.

And Music: pangs of sharp and dissonant cries,  
Assuaged by murmuring notes of deep content,  
And poignant calls, and amorous, low replies,  
And agony, and languors strangely blent,  
And one seductive phrase to do its part,  
Ever recurring, torn from Music's heart.

Then Love: now end, my ballad, with this name,  
Ultimate sweetness of these ministering things;  
For lo, my gaze is turned upon the ground,  
And lo, my mouth, made mute, no longer sings.  
Words for these prelude-notes,—but ah, no word  
For this most rapturous concluding chord!



## A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SQUARE

Moonlight for other people, but for us, if you please,  
no moonlight.

For us, the electric lights in the very heart of the  
city.

For us the Square, the heart of life (you know  
where the Square is) —

The long veins of light that are streets run this way  
and that way out of it.

They carry off part of the blood, and yet the heart  
seems full of it.

Throbbing, pulsing, one drop is a courtesan, one a  
great lady.

Here in the Square they mix; everything here is  
confluent;

See the crush of colors through the bright café windows  
yonder;

See the laughter and food, the faces, the pink-and-  
white women;

Then the gamut of passions struck out of different  
faces

Here in the blur of the streets, as the drops of blood  
course by you

In the white electric glare or the yellow flood from  
the street-lamps.

Oh-hé! for the glorious life at night!

For this pushing tide of the human.

What are the fields and streams

To living man and woman?

Oh-hé! How I love this rush of life,

To bathe in it, passing by;

The city to live and love in,

The country to sleep and die!

No, I will stand here yet; no, do not make me go  
with you,—

Here I gain life and strength from the fierce mag-  
netic current.

Yes, half down the block, if you say you will bring  
me back here.

Love, let me linger yet; be good to me, love, be  
patient!

—Just half a block away, and yet the gray gloom and  
the houses,

Frowning gloomily down, and the click of our feet on  
the pavement

Make it seem lonely; and yes,—my lips, love, yes,—  
if you want them—

What a kiss, strange and short, here in the street, in  
the city!

I to be kissed like this, by the flaring flame of a  
street-lamp!

What if a passer—then, your face, too, felt so chilly  
Touching mine in this air; but oh—and alas!—none  
the less, love,

No such wonderful kiss shall we ever again give  
each other.

Sweetened by just the thought of its maddening  
briefness and folly,

No one can understand but only we two what the savor,  
Lent it by strangeness and night, and the stir of the  
streets just beyond us.

Oh, take me back!—but that kiss, to think we can  
never re-live it!

One of those wonderful moments not to come twice  
in a lifetime.

We have the Square to thank for it: it was conceived  
over yonder.

Now take me back to forget what you and I could  
not live over

If we should live till these streets and the city are  
crumbled to ruin,

Wholly forgotten and past, a dream of the dead  
brutal ages.

## WRITTEN BENEATH A CRUCIFIX

He hath not guessed Christ's agony,  
He hath not dreamed his bitterest woe,  
Who hath not worn the crown of love  
And felt the crown of anguish so.

Ah, not the torments of the cross,  
Or nails that pierced, or thirst that burned,  
Heightened the kingly Victim's pain,  
But grief of griefs,—His love was spurned!

## A PRAYER

A morrow must come on  
When I shall wake to weep ;  
But just for some short hours,  
God, give me sleep !

I ask not hope's return ;  
As I have sowed I reap.  
Grief must awake with dawn,—  
Yet, oh, to sleep !

No dreams, dear God, no dreams :  
Mere slumber, dull and deep,  
Such as thou givest brutes,—  
Sleep, only sleep !

## ART

See! This is how she standeth,—  
A woman, calm and ageless,  
Clad only in a garment  
Of pure and spotless flesh;  
While round her shrine forever  
Circle the eager faces  
Of those who serve her gladly,  
Whose souls she hath in mesh.

Of gold in grain or nugget,  
Of fruits and dewy blossoms,  
Of lambs upon her altars  
She hath no joy or heed.  
She only asketh heart-blood  
Wrung out in toil and anguish:  
Its drops of shining crimson  
Are sweet to her indeed.

Yet see the upturned faces!  
Their lips are dry with fasting,  
Their cheeks are gray and sunken,—  
    Yet, ah, the rapturous eyes!  
They ask no joy but toiling,  
They ask no hope but serving,  
And with their life-blood furnish  
    Her pleasing sacrifice.

No golden world-fruit tempts them;  
Love bares her rosy bosom,  
And smiles between her tresses  
    Vainly on such as these.  
The youths who take her service  
Pledge to a jealous goddess,  
Who will have naught but labor,  
    And labor on their knees.

She giveth this for guerdon:  
Age that descends in youth-time,  
Lit by one star's faint shining  
    That struggles through the gloom.  
A name in ink that fadeth  
Writ on Fame's musty pages,  
Mouthed by the fools and happy,  
    And scrawled upon a tomb.



## DAYS AND NIGHTS

Higher the daily hours of anguish rise,  
And mount about me as the swelling deep,  
Till past my mouth and eyes their moments flow,  
And I am drowned in sleep.

But soon the tide of night begins to ebb;  
Chained on the barren shore of dawn I lie,  
Again to hear the day's slow-rising flood,  
Again to live and die.

## ROYALTY

Pity the king! The state must see him born,  
And at the end the state must see him die;  
And scarce an hour is free of prying eyes,  
From royal birth to royal agony.  
Yet at such life the king must make no moan:  
He is his people's, he is not his own.

Pity the poet: if he hath a woe  
Or joy, 't is only sent him that he may  
Reveal its depth to all men in a song;  
Nor hide it like all other men, and,  
In pain or bliss, his is the second place:  
The first belongs to all his waiting race.

## AN EXPERIENCE

Oh, if I could but compass it !  
If I could go away  
And gain, in that strange northern land,  
Six months of ceaseless day !

There, starting from these awful dreams  
To find it still was light,  
Perhaps I might forget, in time,  
The horrors of that night !

## THE PRAYER OF OCEAN

The rivers all flow down unto the sea ;  
And yet the yearning Ocean moans for more,  
To quench its deep, insatiable thirst.

It sends its cry to God along the shore:  
"Drive thou some mighty river through the land,  
That, drinking, I lie quiet on my strand.

"Quench thou, O God, thy Ocean's bitter thirst!  
Oh, let me drink my fill of some fresh tide!  
I would not with complaints make sad the land  
If this fierce craving once were satisfied.  
I would stretch out in sleep from shore to shore,  
And praise thee with my silence evermore."

## THE MEANING

*He that loseth his life shall find it.*

I lost my life in losing love.  
This blurred my Spring and killed its dove.  
Along my path the dying roses  
Fell, and disclosed the thorns thereof.

I found my life in finding God.  
In ecstasy I kiss the rod;  
For who that wins the goal but lightly  
Thinks of the thorns whereon he trod?

## FRATERNITY

I ask not how thy suffering came,  
Or if by sin, or if by shame,  
Or if by Fate's capricious rulings:  
To my large pity all 's the same.

Come close and lean against a heart  
Eaten by pain and stung by smart;  
It is enough if thou hast suffered,—  
Brother or sister then thou art.

We will not speak of what we know,  
Rehearse the pang, nor count the throe,  
Nor ask what agony admitted  
Thee to the Brotherhood of Woe.

But in our anguish-darkened land  
Let us draw close, and clasp the hand;  
Our whispered password holds assuagement,—  
The solemn "Yea, I understand!"

## FRANCESCA AND PAOLO

There 's a picture on my wall  
Of the hapless, sinful twain,—  
Clinging forms that float embraced  
Through a mist of fiery rain —  
Onward borne in lurid space  
By the burning winds that blow.  
Oft I fancy in the night  
I can hear them whispering low  
Each to each the secret dear:  
“Hell 's not Hell, since thou art here!”

## A CROWNED POET

In thy coach of state  
Pass, O King, along:  
He no envy feels  
To whom God giveth song.

Starving, still I smile,  
Laugh at want and wrong:  
He is fed and crowned  
To whom God giveth song.

Better than all pomps  
That to rank belong,—  
One such dream as his  
To whom God giveth song.

Let us greet, O King,  
As we pass along:  
He, too, is a king  
To whom God giveth song.



## AGONY

I love to feel a bitter throe  
Rise to its fullest height,  
Then watch a conquering anodyne  
Softly assert its might.

I sometimes fear that ill content  
In heaven I shall remain,  
Unless the good God graciously  
Accords to me my pain.

For no delight is half so sheer  
As pangs that melt in peace;  
One gladly pays in torture's coin  
For pleasures of release.

God knowing that, this strange desire  
He gave my heart and brain,  
Will make my heaven more keen to me  
By still allowing pain.

## A PLEA

You think I do not note that highest peak  
In Art's fair mountain-land? Nay, but I see,  
And more than that, half-way along its height  
Run lines of frozen foot-prints made by me.

Ask of those travelers who have stood upon  
Its dizziest height, to tell you of the trail  
I left upon those snows as far along  
As where the mists begin to weave their veil.

And when the pilgrims in that bitter air  
See my faint footsteps where they pause, then go  
Vale-ward again, they do but smile and say :  
"Small woman-feet! They could not tread this snow.

"She has returned to walk in household ways."  
And, passing by the landmark made by me,  
They breathless struggle on, and mount the crest  
That I shall never reach, and scarce can see.

But oh, my heart is with them! By the hearth  
I chose, I swear I might have mounted still,  
And stood there with the cloud-rack round my head!  
The power and strength were mine, though not the  
will.

So speak not of me, comrades, as of one  
Too weak to win the summit where you stand,  
And thus unworthy of your greeting shout  
That echoes down to this green pasture-land.

But say, "She could not choose: one power there is  
As great as Art, the lord of our domain;  
And when Love leadeth down the mountain-path,  
A woman's feet to follow him are fain.

"She could not choose: so sometimes when we share  
The mystic joys and pains she cannot claim,  
We will remember she was of us once  
And, as of comrade dead, speak soft her name."

## ART AND LOVE

*They that carried us away captive required of us a song.*

Bid me not sing: think of the gifts I gave  
To love and thee; require me not to sing!  
They who crown poets now must pass me by:  
I have no claim to wear the bays they bring.  
To please thy mood one day I broke my lute,  
And now forever is my music mute.

Bid me not sing: since when thy mouth met mine,  
"Love, love," the only words my lips can say.  
Lost is the cunning of my worshipped art;  
Among my peers I must walk dumb alway.  
For thee I counted song a worthless thing.  
My heart will break if now thou bidst me sing!

## MORNING: AN IMPRESSION

Instead of black—brown gloom  
In all the darkened room,  
A struggle of dull light through the thick curtain.  
A stir, the natural happiness from sleep,  
Forgetfulness that one must weep  
When this vague shadowy land becomes more certain.  
And then—poor, tortured brain,  
Thou art awake again!

Come, arm thyself to meet the awful day,  
Thy sweet, brief respite 's done.  
Rouse thyself, suffering one,  
To bear thy misery as best thou may;  
To think the thoughts again  
That madden thee with pain,—  
There 's no escape, oh, thou rebellious brain!

## A WORD TO MY HEART

Yes, the days will still be dappled  
With sweet showers and gleams of sun,  
And the storms will not last forever,—  
But my beautiful days are done.

To be tired so soon in the journey,  
With the race perhaps but half run !  
To know while the Spring yet lingers  
That my beautiful days are done !

Ah, my Heart, we are very weary ;  
But courage, thou suffering one !  
For all days, sooner or later,  
Like my beautiful days, are done !

## INSOMNIA

O would God call a halt,—one moment's halt  
To that procession marching through my brain!  
I would awake in thankful quiet, lie  
And watch the long defile begin again;  
Would make no further dry-mouthed moans for sleep;  
Would take up patience in sweet hope's default,  
And mutely bear the burthen of the hours,—  
If God would call a halt,—one moment's halt!

## A RHYME OF THE POTTER

The potter with his clay does what he will:  
Elects one shape to honor, one to shame.  
So far, so just; but for the fouler shape  
The potter, not the vessel, is to blame.



## A WORD AT PARTING

Hadst thou been false to me alone,  
I haply might forgive ;  
But false to self,—that baser way,—  
And yet I still must live !

Hadst thou been cruel to me alone,  
I haply might forget ;  
But cruel to self,—that baser way,—  
I must remember yet !

## TWO LOST HEROES

And so Death took your hero.

How kind to you was Fate?

For Death but crystallizes Life,

And you need only wait.

Death keeps him, dear, safe from all tainting touch:

I in your place could scarcely weep so much.

For I, too, lost my hero.

Would God it were by death!

Would God that he were sainted,

That I might spend my breath

In praying Heaven to make my deeds so sweet

That he might welcome me when we should meet!

Alas, alas, my hero!

How often we bow down,

Deceived, to crown a coward king

And deify a clown!

Pass on; compared to me you know not grief.

You have lost him, but I have lost Belief!

## A MEDIÆVAL DEATH-BED

O brother, little brother,  
A charge I have for thee  
To keep when I in three days' time  
Am laid 'neath kirk-yard tree.

Now fetch my mass-book from the shelf;  
This flower, its leaves between,  
Was not so blue by half that noon  
As were his bonny een.

But pressed 'twixt holy psalm and prayer  
In scarce a twelvemonth's space,  
They 've turned to nigh as pale a hue  
As hath thy sister's face.

Go take this mass-book in thy hand,  
Thy dirk-knife at thy side,  
And take thy trusty hound with thee,  
And seek the Lord of Clyde.



"May every son that's born to thee  
Be curst with strong desire,  
Yet powerless by the hand of God  
To sin as sinned his'sire.

"May every prayer change on thy lips  
To awful blasphemy,  
So that by thine own prayer thy soul  
Must needs accurséd be."

Now, long life to the Lord of Clyde,  
And may my curse work well.  
I could not bide in heaven were he  
Undoomed to bide in hell.

The little angels I shall leave,  
My harp I shall forget;  
'T will be my heaven to look on him  
From heaven's parapet.

To see the justice of the Lord  
Worked out in such a way,  
Would turn hell's gloom for one like me  
To bright eternal day.

Fare on, my little brother, now,  
And do my last behest;  
Turn thou my face against the wall,  
And I will sweetly rest.

Farewell, and yet a long farewell,  
For death will come to me  
Before thyself and Jock, thy hound,  
Come back from Airdislee.

But if the curse thou carry well,  
The good God I will ask  
To let Jock enter heaven with thee,  
Because thou didst this task.

Repeat the curse upon the way,  
Again and yet again;  
And be thou blest and be he damned,—  
Hear me, O God! Amen.

## CRITICISM

She sang a song of death and battle,  
Through which one heard the cannon roll.  
They said, "O wondrous gift of fancy,  
The glorious dower of poet-soul!"

She sang a song of love and passion —  
Love's land, she sang, was very fair.  
They said no more of wondrous fancy,  
They said, "She lays her own heart bare."

## REFUGE

Not to live in thy arms, O Belovéd—

I do not ask that of fate;

Past summer nights were the time for dreaming,

And this dream came too late.

Only to die in thy arms, Belovéd—

Thy kiss to drink my last breath;

Too late for the dream, yet I dreamed. What matter?

There are still thy arms— and death!



## DESOLATION

Strive not, dear Love, to hide from me thy pain;  
I know thou lov'st, and art not loved again.  
So I love thee, yea, just as much in vain;  
Shrink not then, Love: we bear a common pain.

We two, alone and chilled, stand side by side,  
By a grief severed, by a grief allied.  
The earth a snow-clad moorland stretches wide,  
And we are far apart, though side by side.

## RESOLVE

He kissed my hand,—the hand that holds the pen,—  
Bathed it in love, from finger-tips to wrist.  
The wandering veins that felt his lips' impress  
Throbbled with new life the moment they were  
kissed.

The hand itself, thus blest, shall strive to be  
Worthy its honor, and shall only write  
Words consecrate to high and lofty life  
From this time on, in memory of to-night.

## CHEATED

You loved me for the gold you thought I had ;  
I loved you for the honor, proud and high,  
I dreamed was in your soul. Alas, poor fools !  
Which was worse cheated, think you, you or I ?

And now we meet with shamed, averted eyes ;  
For such false fancies both may meetly sigh ;  
For I am poor as any beggar-maid,  
And you are not the flower of chivalry.

Come, once my suitor, come, extend your hand ;  
'T is fitting that we thus should say good-by.  
Come, let us bid adieu on common ground,  
Though you were scarce so greatly duped as I !

## A WOMAN'S ADIEU

Our love is done!

I would not have it back, I say,—  
I would not have my whole year May!  
But yet for our dead passion's sake,  
Kiss me once more, and strive to make  
Our last kiss the supremest one,  
For love is done.

Our love is done!

And still my eyes with tears are wet,  
Our souls are stirred with vague regret,  
We gaze farewell, yet cannot speak,  
And firm resolve grows strangely weak,  
Though hearts are twain that once were one,  
Since love is done.

But love is done!  
I know it, vow it, and that kiss  
Must set a finis to our bliss;  
Yet when I felt thy mouth meet mine,  
My life again seemed half divine,  
Our very hearts together run!  
Can love be done?

Can love be done?  
Who cares if this be mad or wise?  
Trust not my words, but read my eyes;  
Thy kiss bade sleeping love awake,  
Then take me to thy heart—ah, take  
The life that with thine own is one!  
Love is not done.

## SEE-SAW

Oh is it food for sighs at Fate,  
Or is it food for laughter,  
That men should love the best to-day,  
And women the day after?

Men seize the hour to vow and kiss,  
Forget, and onward wander;  
But women on the morrow sigh,  
"To-day I would be fonder!"

Women steal back, look through the pales  
At finished yesterday.  
"Why was it winter with me then,  
When now my mood is May?"

How fair for women were the world,  
How full of song and laughter,  
If they could love to-day, or men  
Could love them the day after!

## A MOTHER'S SONG

Dear little one upon my breast,  
Not ~~for~~ thy sake alone I love;  
But when thy dawn-bright eyes unclose  
To mine, that watch thee from above,  
In softened mold I vaguely trace  
The lines of his beloved face.

Ah, little one, not solely mine,  
But mine and his, thus doubly sweet;  
And ours to guide on heavenward path  
The journeyings of those little feet.  
'T is joy, not fears, that brings these tears,  
Thou 'rt God's and ours through all the years!

## THE FLIGHT

Love is already on the wing:

How quick to fly, once he was freed!

We would not call him if we could,—

God-speed, dear Love, God-speed!

Love is already on the wing:

Both you and I are glad indeed.

Yet voices tremble as we cry,

“God-speed, dear Love, God-speed!”



## ALLEGIANCE

I used to lay my cheek upon the pillow,  
Obeying thee, the calm was sweet and deep :  
“ Be thy last conscious thought of me in waking,  
Ere thy soul sinks in sleep.”

O bitter, later nights, when still obeying,  
My soul must needs its awful vigil keep,  
Until at dawn the body failed in stupor—  
A mockery of sleep.

Thou still art lord in death ; for now in passing  
My soul doth its obedient habit keep,  
And its last conscious thought is thine this moment,  
Sinking, thank God, in sleep !

## UNDERNEATH

I am weary of mask and of buskin,  
I would throw them aside for a time;  
But you laugh when I speak of my sorrows,—  
They are pretty enough for a rhyme.  
But sorrow — the women who know it  
Smile not, nor are jesting the while!  
You are baffled, like all men, my dearest,  
By the simple device of a smile.

I think of a certain fair meadow  
Engirdled by trees where birds sing;  
And in May gay with white and gold daisies  
Flung down like a carpet by Spring;  
And in winter still fair, with its hollows  
And hillocks enfolded in snow;  
Yet that once was a battle-field, dearest,  
And its dead, none the less, lie below!

## IMPOSSIBILITY

Is love eternal in the highest souls?  
Is it, then, low to love, and love again?  
Spring goes, and comes back every year to throw  
Fresh garlands of old kinds on field and fen.  
Though not the same, are they not just as sweet,  
These violets crushed beneath our passing feet?

I do not love thee, dearest, as I loved,—  
As good, but not the same, my love for thee.  
I can for thee re-sing the old dear song,  
Merely transposing to another key.  
Throw not on me that icy look of blame,—  
What matter, if the tune remain the same?

Ask not the river for a last year's tide  
She yielded tributary to the sea;  
Ask not of fate long years of garnered love,  
Stored up with prescience when I knew not thee.  
Ask for my every drop of blood up to the last,  
But do not, in God's name, require the past.

## AN EXPLANATION

Ah, well I know that just beyond the gate  
Lies the long glade where once I used to stray ;  
Yet cease, for friendship's sake, these urging words  
To tread this year the old accustomed way.

I am afraid of that green hedge-girt walk,  
The silent sun-scorched field, the moist, dim wood,  
And then — O little corner by the fallen tree,  
O distant murmur of the ocean flood !

No memories of another haunt the place.  
Yet, while I whisper, pity and forbear.  
'T is that I dare not face my last year's self,  
The happy ghost that ever wanders there !

## BLACK MAGIC

I would forgive the sleepless nights,  
I would forgive the pain,  
If you would only give me back  
My own dear world again.

I cannot put in subtle words  
The mischief you have done.  
But there 's a difference in the storm,  
A difference in the sun.

The marshes have an evil look,  
The sea lies stripped and bare;  
The gracious mists seem torn away  
From nature everywhere.

I may forget the sleepless nights,  
I may forget the pain;  
But I, alas, shall never see  
My own dear world again!

## A SECRET

They pass, and smile, and nod the head,  
They do not guess that I am dead.  
Dear friends, I died a year ago,  
Only I never told you so.  
I dine, and never does my host  
Suspect he entertains a ghost,  
Who, when her body dies, will be  
No stranger in eternity.  
If I but wore a plaited shroud,  
And could not breathe, or speak aloud,  
And lay with lilies at my head,  
Then they would come and whisper, "Dead."  
But you, dear friends, my secret know:  
I really died a year ago.

## A MADMAN

The man most to be envied  
That my eyes ever saw  
Fancied he was a king, and wore  
A crown of plaited straw.  
He lived in regal dignity,  
And nothing made him sad—  
This happy king! They pitied him,  
Merely that he was mad.  
And yet the men who mourned with sighs  
His lamentable state  
Were tortured heart and brain by care  
And sorrow's leaden weight.  
I thought what strange ideas of life  
These suffering people had,  
To wish him sane and wretched, when  
He was so happy, mad!

## SUPPLICATION

Did I not ask for him, my dear, my own,  
All goodly things of God?  
I thought that sand of gold must needs be spread  
Upon the path he trod.

I asked for joy and glory as his right,  
With arrogance of love.  
God did not give them to him here below:  
Perhaps He will, above.

O there was nothing good I did not name  
In asking gifts for him,  
And now all prayers have dwindled down to one,  
Whispered with eyes grown dim—

That last short, humble prayer left us to say,  
Bent 'neath the scourging rod:  
“O grant his coming pains of death be brief,—  
An easy passing, God!”



## A SONG OF SORROW

These days my breaking heart laments,  
    These nights I weep with moan and sigh;  
For they must die who fain would live,  
    And they must live who fain would die!

O friends unknown, come mourn with me;  
    For bitterest grief hides in that cry.  
Ask not if, dying, I would live;  
    Ask not if, living, I would die!

## TO A NUN

The world said in thine ear, "Lo, thou art fair :  
An ivory house, a shelter meet for Love."  
But thou instead hast made thy saintly self  
An habitation for the Heavenly Dove.

## IN PRAISE OF LIFE

I am so glad to suffer pain,  
To bear the old, fierce pangs again,  
For torturing thought wars with this torture  
For utter mastery in vain.

How little of the soul they know  
Who paint Hell as the body's woe :  
They have not guessed the spirit's anguish  
That finds relief in fleshly throe.

O fool ! to dream thy misery  
Shall fade, once from thy body free,  
Thinkest thou the soul forgets in passing  
That with the flesh dies memory ?

Body and pain, I cling to thee,  
From thy diverting clamors free ;  
Alas, for my sad soul, when, naked  
In death, it fights with memory !

## A PRISONER

What difference, what difference,  
Which way the body goes;  
Whether 't is burned by Indian suns,  
Or chilled by Arctic snows?

The soul remains forevermore  
Shut in that one small room,  
As close immured within those walls  
As dead men in the tomb.

It could not leave that wretched spot  
To follow if it willed,—  
Condemned, unhappy ghost, to haunt  
The place where it was killed.

It calls the shuddering body back,  
Wherever it may be,  
To come there, to that dreadful place,  
And bear it company.

“Come back, thou coward body, come!”

It clamors to the heart.

“Come here and die, where I was killed,  
Thy lord, and better part!”

## THE ELEVENTH HOUR

Why should the gods have sent you at twilight?

Life is too late with me now for a lover.

Melted away are the mists of my morning,

And love-time is over.

Why should the gods have sent you at twilight?

Nay, my friend, nay, for the shadows grow deeper.

Yet to dream of your love shall make the grave's  
midnight

Sweet to one sleeper.

## A SEASON REMEMBERED

I shall never forget those last few days  
Before the death of my heart:  
Spring had just leaped in the womb of the year  
With its first glad vital start;  
Black buds were splitting to show their green,  
Fresh showers had washed the blue heavens clean,  
The whole sweet world with joy was rife,  
Because the year had just felt life.

I shall never forget those last few days  
Before the death of my heart:  
In all the life-quiver and bourgeoning  
I felt I had parcel and part;  
It is so good that I did not guess  
I must change those fields for the wilderness;  
It is so good that I did not know  
I must leave the spring and go back to the snow.

## HOMESICKNESS

O take me back to those low-lying lands

I used to love. I want that inlet's tide  
That runs out moaning 'twixt the yellow fields

To where the shimmering blue is rippling wide,  
And lay my broken body on the sands

Where strong and sparse marsh-grasses wave above  
The salty earth that bears them; let me rest,  
For I am very tired of faithless love.

And let me feel upon my pallid mouth

The wind's rough, friendly kisses, cold and clean,  
Against the lips that can but shape a moan,

Where warmer, falser kisses once have been.  
I want to lay my cheek on kindly earth,  
I want to see the truthful sky above,  
I want those old things I have long forgot,  
For I am very tired of faithless love.



## LET THE DREAM GO

I was so fain to love, dear!

Let the dream go.

The brightest vision dies of dawn,

The rose of snow,

And blossoms all fall from the tree

When June winds blow.

I was so fain to live, dear!

Let the dream go.

Who heeds the faded blooms of May

That drift below?

And though Spring's self

Should weep for them,

They would not know.

## DISILLUSION

I wish I might have borne the woe  
Of hopeless love and unrequited,  
And kept a noble all my life  
The man my sovereign fancy knighted.

I thought that pain was hard to bear;  
'T was light beside this later sorrow:  
To bid farewell to him to-day,  
Nor care to see him on the morrow!

## AT A POET'S FUNERAL

Thou sang'st no labored virelay,  
Thou hadst no tunes to suit thy day,  
And so the world hath not drawn near  
To praise and weep about thy bier.  
Thou hadst not trilled a dainty song,  
Nor slurred in art the darling wrong,  
Nor sucked such milk as one who feeds  
At withered breasts of ancient creeds.  
An age too soon thy soul did stray  
From heaven to earth down star-lit way,  
And none had grace to understand,  
And bend to kiss thy prophet hand,  
And dimly guess the future might  
Of pen plunged in thy heart to write.  
Yet, though that ink of blood and tears  
Shall glow as fire in coming years,

Save hirelings and I to-day  
None watch thy clay returned to clay.  
Yet prouder I the claim to have  
To stand here by this open grave  
Than laureate with the right to sing  
Beside the catafalque of king.  
O friend, this lonely scene bespeaks  
The vengeance that the gay world wreaks  
On him whose name shall bear this stain:  
"He loved the truth, and spake too plain."

## LAST WORDS

I waste no pity on my dying self,  
Because some woman yet may take my place  
(Nay, swear no oaths that future days may rue,  
But closer to mine own bend thy dear face).

Hers it will be to sigh; for, knowing thee,  
This, too, I know: the old dream shall obtain,  
Even while thy head rests soft upon her arm,  
And while thy hand of her warm hand is fain.

And every kiss given in despair to her  
Upon my lips in fancy will be pressed,  
And soon or late her breaking heart will learn  
She cannot drive thy dead love from thy breast.

O blame me not, since I must go, that I  
Can snatch prophetic triumph in this hour.  
I who have been thy Light, thy Love, thine Own  
Will not, in death, resign my queenly power.

I shall be thine. Thy soul cannot divorce  
Me from my place. I fear no later days,  
Though in them thou wilt learn to smile again,  
And walk with seeming cheer earth's pleasant ways.

Yes, thine I still shall be,—as truly thine,  
Perhaps, as when warm kisses I could give;  
And so re-kissed, re-loved, and re-embraced in her  
By thy despair, I, being dead, shall live!

## RECOLLECTION

How can it be that I forget  
The way he phrased my doom,  
When I recall the arabesques  
That carpeted the room ?

How can it be that I forget  
His look and mien that hour,  
When I recall I wore a rose,  
And still can smell the flower ?

How can it be that I forget  
Those words that were the last,  
When I recall the tune a man  
Was whistling as he passed ?

These things are what we keep from life's  
Supremest joy or pain ;  
For Memory locks her chaff in bins  
And throws away the grain.

## OF LATE

There was a time when I could think of death  
As calmly as of life: 't was ere I knew  
What sacrament of joy beyond all dream  
Lies in the life welded from love of two.

Now at its whisper I more closely cling  
In deadliest fear to thee. Yet one must die,  
And some day one must leave the other here,—  
Ay, one must go first, either thou or I!

And then I heavenward turn my anguished face,  
And thank God that the way at least is free;  
And none can hold, if through the pass of Death,  
Even as through life, I choose to follow thee!



## SUPPOSE

How sad if, by some strange new law,  
All kisses scarred !  
For she who is most beautiful  
Would be most marred.

And we might be surprised to see  
Some lovely wife  
Smooth-visaged, while a seeming prude  
Was marked for life.

## A TRUTHFUL SONG OF AGE

(*Senex loquitur*)

Only the craven cries, time-conquered,  
"Fair is this quiet space of honored age!"  
I, if I could, would give all days remaining  
To gain one hour to-night of youth's sweet rage!

Ah, how I loathe these feeble nerves and trembling,  
This hoary hair, this yellow, time-etched brow!  
Ah, to stand straight and strong, the hot blood leaping  
Through this chill body, shrunk and withered now!

Ah, for sweet love, that drove me nigh to madness!  
His half the royalty of youth's brief reign.  
No red lips kiss me now; how could they bear it,  
Through my parched skin the death's-head shows so  
plain!

Lies told myself will never serve to soothe me,  
Why should I vow I find life's sunset bright?  
Mine is a soul that should have passed at mid-day;  
It turns with horror from the gathering night!

## APRIL—AND DYING

Green blood fresh pulsing through the trees,  
Black buds, that sun and shower distend;  
All other things begin anew,  
But I must end.

Warm sunlight on faint-colored sward,  
Warm fragrance in the breezes' breath;  
For other things are heat and life,  
For me is death.

## LIVES

To drain as the nectar of heaven  
The dregs of thy youth's poisoned wine ;  
To stand in thy shadow forever,  
And hold the shade better than shine—  
This is mine.

To spurn, lest its burden impede thee,  
A love counted once half divine ;  
To tread on a heart without heeding  
In thy struggle up life's steep incline—  
This is thine.

Yet in the black hour when death crosses  
Life's feebly hedged boundary line,  
Which lot wouldst thou choose as thy record,  
Closed till judgment, and sealed with thy sign—  
Thine or mine?

## FANNY

### A SOUTHERN BLOSSOM

Come and see her as she stands,  
Crimson roses in her hands ;  
    And her eyes  
Are as dark as Southern night,  
Yet than Southern dawn more bright,  
And a soft, alluring light  
    In them lies.

None deny if she beseech  
With that pretty, liquid speech  
    Of the South.  
All her consonants are slurred,  
And the vowels are preferred ;  
There 's a poem in each word  
    From that mouth.

Even Cupid is her slave;  
Of his arrows, half he gave  
    Her one day  
In a merry, playful hour.  
Dowered with these and beauty's dower,  
Strong indeed her magic power,  
    So they say.

Venus, not to be outdone  
By her generous little son,  
    Shaped the mouth  
Very like to Cupid's bow.  
Lack-a-day! Our North can show  
No such lovely flowers as grow  
    In the South!

## AN OLD REFRAIN

O homely, puzzling, truthful words  
We women sometimes say !  
I love you just as much, dear heart,  
But in a different way.

We cannot tell you what we mean,  
However you may pray,  
Nor make you feel the later love  
Is quite so sweet a way.

Yet often truer than your oaths  
Those foolish words we say :  
"I love you just as much, dear heart,  
But in a different way."



## LOVE, THE WANDERER

At my threshold stands a guest ;  
Shall I, dare I, bid him enter ?  
'T is the very dead of winter ;  
Snowy roads his feet have pressed ;  
Inhospitably I wait,  
Trembling, still I hesitate.

With his wings he veils his face,  
And a glory half divine  
Like a nimbus seems to shine  
Round him, making bright the place.  
Cold the night, and yet I stand,  
On the latch a halting hand.

What if I should bid him come,  
And with him should enter Woe?  
For 't is whispered, well we know,  
That the pair together roam;  
And who welcomes Love, they say,  
Lies in Woe, who stays away.

Yet—the night is very chill!  
Love is shivering with the cold;  
'T is, mayhap, a fable old  
That he bringeth tears and ill.  
Sure a maiden's heart were hard  
Thus to keep the entrance barred!

Hark! I hear his piteous moan,  
Welcome, Love, the house is thine,  
Shelter, fire, and meat and wine—  
Welcome, Love, and take thine own.  
And if with thee enter Woe,  
Then, in sooth, it must be so!

## SOUVENIRS

*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan ?*

Where is the glove that I gave to him,  
Perfumed and warm from my arm that night ?  
And where is the rose that another stole  
When the land was flooded with June moonlight,  
And the satin slipper I wore ?—Alack,

Some one had that—it was wrong, I fear.  
Where are those souvenirs to-day ?

But where are the snows of yester-year ?

The glove was burned at his next love's prayer,  
And the rose was lost in the mire of the street ;  
And the satin slipper he tossed away,  
For his jealous bride had not fairy feet.  
Give what you will, but know, mesdames,

For a day alone are your favors dear.  
Be sure for the next fair woman's sake  
They will go—like the snows of yester-year.

## HARKING BACKWARD

You strive and strive to read my thought.

I say and say, you will repent.

Foolhardy Soul, come, then, and read,

Since thus you crave your own torment.

Come, see this room far down a street,

Where never trod your hurrying feet!

Come, see this curtained, cushioned room,

All bathed in amorous crimson light;

Within, the roses die of warmth,

Without is chill of bitter night;

The blur of sound from city street

But makes the silence doubly sweet.

And see me listening for a step—

Oh, I am tired. Nay, see no more,  
Nor listen to the hasting feet

Come down the echoing corridor.  
No further, though your prayers besought  
To follow to the end my thought!

Oh, I am tired. So hold me close,  
My lips against your suffering face.  
And keep my soul here with your eyes,  
Lest it should travel back through space.  
Leaving my body on your breast,—  
A bird, that wants its last year's nest!

## RELICS

I thought I knew her past as mine,  
Until she lay there dead,  
And I explored that Indian chest  
Lacquered in gold and red.

I did not stop to moralize;  
The lesson there was plain.  
I hurried home to tear and burn,  
And make her loss my gain.

How inconsiderate to die  
And leave such things to paint  
An unguessed past, when friends bereaved  
Prefer to mourn a saint!

## LOVE AND LORE

**Ah**, let my hand lie warm in thine, the hand that held  
the pen;

**It** shall not miss its once-loved task, nor long to work  
again.

**And** let me hide my weary eyes against thy sheltering  
breast;

**Let** others wear the bays I craved; I know that love  
is best!

**Art's** paths were over-sharp for me, and cold its  
mountain air;

**For** I am but a woman, dear, and Love's land is so  
fair!

**So** half-way up Fame's steep incline I pause and yield  
my place.

**What!** dare you ask if I regret? Bend close and  
read my face!

## A SILENT EPISODE

In a procrastinating car  
That slowly jogged along Broadway,—  
She on some pious errand bound,  
I to a matinée.

The Little Sister of the Poor  
Who faced me, gave me one long glance:  
A commentary on our lives,  
On fate and circumstance.

Her look first dwelt upon my face,  
And then it traveled slowly down,  
Took in my opera-glass and furs,  
My rather modish gown.



"And is the world so sweet and bad?"

The saintly blue eyes seemed to ask;

"Does pleasure bring one keener joy

Than my unceasing task?

"My life comprises only this,

To toil and weep and serve and pray;

But youth and pleasure, song and gold,

Make your life bright and gay."

And my eyes answered her, but she

Could not, perhaps, translate their glance.

"Ah, Sister, what an irony

Is outward circumstance!

"Beneath this silken bodice beats

A heart as grave as 'neath thy serge;

And, deaf to melody, it hears

Naught but its own sad dirge.

"Often it sighs for hours like yours,

A cell where it might weep unheard;

Freedom to doff the mask of smiles

By the gay world preferred.



“And if your gentle soul would pray  
For hearts whose pain no tongue can tell;  
Those who need prayers are in the world,—  
Not in a convent-cell.”

The car stopped, and with eyes downcast  
She hurried out on bright Broadway;  
While I went on, with envious heart,—  
A player, to a play.



## THE RING

Hid in an antique box,  
With faded leaf and flower  
(The only fitting gifts  
Of love that lives an hour),  
Gemmed with a diamond tear  
For joy that could not cling,  
Behold the word inside,  
For "*Toujours*," says the ring!

She sometimes lifts the lid,  
With light and careless laugh,  
And reads the lying word,  
Love's mocking epitaph.  
She has no sighs or tears  
For such a foolish thing  
As love dead long ago,  
Yet—" *Toujours*," says the ring!

But in soft nights of May  
The proud and silent heart  
Owns to itself a truth,  
And spurns its wonted part.  
It cries out for the grace  
Of one departed spring,  
"*Toujours*," admits the soul,  
And "*Toujours*," says the ring!

## A SONG OF FAITHFUL LOVE

He 's no lad,—my love 's no lad,—

He 's past full manhood's prime ;

He never stole a curl from me,

Or sent me bits of rhyme.

But when he folds me in his arm,

I feel so sweetly safe from harm !

He 's no lad,—my love 's no lad,—

No fickle, foolish boy ;

And time has written on his face

The lines of pain and joy.

He often looks both tired and sad,

But I — what joy ! — can make him glad.

He 's no lad,—my love 's no lad,—

His youth has passed him by ;

And though I had no part in it,

I cannot breathe one sigh,

For, oh, he swears by holy truth

I am his sweeter, second youth !

## JANE

(LONG ISLAND DIALECT)

Settin' round the fish-house door,  
Sunset time er pretty near;  
Tellin' stories—some er which  
Would n't wish for ma ter hear.  
Bijer 'n' the younger set  
Squat behin' us mendin' seine,  
'N' I heerd 'im talkin' low,  
Laugh 'n' take her name in vain—  
Her, my Jane!

Her, my youngest down ter York,  
Workin' hard for me an' mine.  
I wa'n't out'er slew thet hour,  
Though I be 'most sixty-nine.

I rose up ter lay 'im low.

"Stan' off, neighbors, lemme be!"

But I dropped my hand, fer all

Knowed of some'h'n' black 'cept me,

I c'd see.

'N' I left 'em on the beach.

Now they all c'd have the'r say;

I made fer the woods, fer thet 's

All hurt creeturs' natchel way.

I can't cal'late *how* I got

Home, but ma was settin' there,

Black cat croonin' on 'er lap,

Lamplight shinin' on 'er hair,

White, f'm care.

Crazy-like I called 'em all,

Lide 'n' Vene, 'n' told 'em how

Her thet was the'r sister once

Wa'n't no sister to 'em now;

"Ner no child of mine," says I;

"Ain't no talk of whose ter blame; .

It 's past pard'nin' when a child

Slimes the black creek-mud o' shame

On my name."

But the farm looked changed, 'n' Jane  
Seemed ter follow every place,—  
Where I 'd go, I 'd see them curls  
Bobbin' round 'er baby face,  
Jest the same as when she 'd run  
Croست the pickle ter the gate,  
(Me a-cartin' seaweed then),  
Callin': "Wait, Janey says, wait!  
Her 'll fix the gate!"

Jane she come back home at last;  
Spite 'er ma, I 'd held my way,  
Wrote 'er thet we cast 'er off,  
'T wa'n't no use ter beg er pray.  
No one talked of sin er shame  
When they brought 'er through the gate,  
An' I knowed 't wa'n't no success  
Tryin' ter sour love inter hate—  
Then, too late!

Fer ther' ain't no shame so black,  
Ner no brandin' of disgrace,  
Thet 's past pard'nin' when yer child.  
Lays there with a dead, white face.



Best room was so dark 'n' still,  
Seemed like she must hear me plain,  
Whisperin': "Jane, fergive yer pa;  
All them words o' mine was vain,—  
Come back, Jane!"

Life ain't what it used ter be.  
Maybe 't ain't fair ter the rest,  
But sence the days er Prodergal  
Folks seems to love the'r worst ones best.  
I 'm gettin' well along in years,  
Wimblin', 'n' weak, 'n' full o' pain,  
'N' more 'n' more seems like she 's here  
A-playin' round the floor—my Jane—  
My little Jane!

## MODERN DESPAIR

He used to fancy she would see him next  
With blossoms heaped about his quiet head;  
That she would kneel repentant at his side,  
And mourn her scorn too late when he was dead.

He did not die; but when they met next year  
His woes and wrongs again burst into flame;  
He longed to score her now with stinging words,  
But he, alas, could not recall her name!

## THE STORY OF A SONG

I wrote a song long years ago  
To celebrate another's woe.  
No soft voice whispered in my ear,  
"Child, thine own fate is written here."  
No prescient thought, o'er-leaping time,  
Told me my doom was in that rhyme.  
I wept for sorrow at her grief—  
Wept—see, upon this faded leaf  
The blistering marks of many tears  
The paper kept through all these years.  
But when I bore this agony,  
The current of my tears ran dry.  
You see, I shed them long ago,  
When my woe was another's woe!

## A NINETEENTH-CENTURY REMEDY

*"The cure for love is more love."*—THOREAU

Listen, that I may work your cure,  
M'sieur ;  
You will not at my story's end  
Call me your love, nor yet your friend ;  
You'll sigh for me no more, depend,  
M'sieur.

I took your love to be my cure,  
M'sieur ;  
Perhaps no man can fathom this—  
I took your kiss to blur his kiss ;  
I coarsened with it all past bliss,  
M'sieur.

I have to thank you for my cure,

M'sieur.

A lower love may kill a higher;

I burned my memories in its fire,—

Mere acrid smoke rose from the pyre,

M'sieur!

Adieu, we both have found our cure,

M'sieur.

Love cannot wound us, passing by;

We know he is not worth one sigh;

Yet, are we happy, you—or I,

M'sieur?

## A REWARD OFFERED

Lost, in the month of December,  
An exquisite dream and belief:  
It either was dropped on Life's highway,  
Or stolen by Time, the arch-thief.  
If found, please return to the owner—  
Its value is small save to her;  
As reward all her earthly possessions  
She offers without a demur.

'Tis so small that the owner could hold it  
In one human heart's little space;  
So great, all earth shone with its brightness  
And looked like a glorified place.  
If found, and returned in good order,  
The offered reward will be paid;  
But the finder is cautioned against delay,—  
Dreams exposed to the air sometimes fade!

## A MODERN ENCHANTRESS

Try as you may, you will not forget me,  
Because I was never attained and possessed.  
Just as your arms were outstretched to enfold me,  
Onward I fled, an incarnate Unrest.

Ever denied makes ever desiring,  
Ever eluded makes ever pursued.  
Still would the chase be on, but that I vanished:  
Tired was the Will-o'-the-wisp whom you wooed.

Love and be loved; you will always remember  
Mine was the magic that holds men in thrall.  
All of you turn from the love that surrenders,  
Sighing for that which gives nothing at all!

## DETHRONED

My rose, 't is scarce an hour ago  
We entered regally this room  
To queen it over suppliant love  
By beauty's right, by right of bloom—  
So rich in both, so sure of power,  
O happy I, O happy flower!

My rose, the hour is gone, and now  
You droop your head against my breast.  
Our reign was brief, our reign is done,—  
Ah, rose, the end we might have guessed!  
But I still live, though dead the hour.  
You died with it, O happy flower!



## A MIDNIGHT RIDE

On and on—

Foot in the stirrup, up and away!  
The night air is sweet with the scent of the May.  
Care and the world and anguish of mind,  
Once in the saddle I leave them behind,  
Dead to all thought but the sense of delight  
In the straining of nerve in our swift onward flight.  
Talk of the passion of love, if you will,  
Of the leaping of heart, of the kisses that thrill,  
I tell you love's bliss could never compare  
With this rapturous race through the midnight air,  
Nor your love's heart-beats make a sound so dear  
As the swift hoof-beat to the rider's ear!  
The days of the Centaurs have not passed by,  
So truly one seem my horse and I.

On and on,—

For life knows no fiercer bliss and delight  
Than this rush through the wind of a summer's  
night.

## A WAYSIDE WARNING

I fainted by the way,  
The August heat burned fiercely all the plain;  
With trembling limbs and turning, dizzying brain  
Prone by the road I lay.

Love passed along that way,  
And in his hand he bore a generous cup;  
With crystal water it was brimming up.

“O give me, or I die!”

Smiling and stooping by my side knelt Love;  
The roadside dust was white. He took thereof  
What in his palm would lie,  
And 'twixt my parching lips he poured, and laughed;  
Then in the road he threw the sparkling draught,  
And so passed by.

O travellers, heed, Love's other name is Hate;  
Ask not his aid, lest ye should share my fate,  
And, like me, die.

## AN EARLY LOVE REMEMBERED

Sometimes, across these later years  
One memory chaste and holy  
Drifts back and makes me love my past  
For that sweet reason solely;  
Not any tide of time or chance  
Bears out of sight the old romance.

No love on earth can satisfy  
The dream of child or poet;  
I who was happy, guessed it not—  
I who am sadder, know it,  
Yet—O dear days! O sweet belief!  
O so well worth all later grief!

And all fair things, too pure for earth,  
And therefore briefly given,—  
Lent to us for a passing hour  
And then recalled to Heaven,

To find their proper place above,—  
Bring back that holy, childish love :

A love most like the fragrant snow  
Of some fair Mary lily,  
Scenting the altar all day long  
To die when night comes chilly ;  
Yet I am glad this heart of mine  
Gave growth to blossom so divine.

Ah, yes, I know that now I love  
In stronger, deeper fashion ;  
But womanhood's completest love  
Is mixed with tears and passion.  
The vision of my morning-tide  
Was joy, and nothing else beside :

A dream that could not be fulfilled  
By mortal love or lover.  
Look not so sad, my own, though we  
Its bliss shall not recover,  
I am the better worth thy love  
For that past vision from above !

## A LITTLE STORY

Alone, unwedded, past her prime,  
Her faded face still wore a smile,  
As if some secret, sweet and dear,  
She knew, and brooded on the while—  
Some hidden joy that kept life fair,  
And lifted her above despair.

Ah me, you could not guess the dream  
She cherished in her maiden heart.  
Once to have voiced it would have been  
To make her wintry life-blood start  
Up, till the wrinkled cheeks aflame  
Glowed with a virgin's piteous shame.

Long years ago she loved, and then—  
Who knows?—he died, or proved untrue,  
And so she lived a maiden still.  
He never wed who rode to woo

Through soft spring mornings long ago,  
And Time had blurred her ancient woe.

But when the day was sunk in night,  
Close by the embers of her fire  
She sat and rocked, and to herself  
Feigned that she had her heart's desire.  
'T was then that on her withered breast  
A little dream-child took its rest.

How sweet to raise a quavering voice,  
And sing a tender lullaby;  
To feel its head against her neck,  
And softly soothe its noiseless cry!  
It made her life so bright and glad—  
That little child she might have had!

Her heart was full of motherhood;  
Its yearnings all had been denied.  
She fed its hunger with a dream,  
And smiled where others might have sighed;  
And in the little dream-child's face  
A likeness vague she loved to trace.

Nay, do not smile: our dreams are coarse,—  
Of gold or fame we could not win,—  
Hers was divine; I love to think  
Of that bent figure, worn and thin,  
By flickering firelight, wholly blest,  
Holding her dream-child on her breast.

I think in wondrous Heaven, where  
The good God makes our hopes come true,  
He may give back my love to me,  
He may give back your youth to you.  
But for that maiden undefiled  
I know he has a little child.

## A SONG AT TWILIGHT

Lay your hand, sweet wife, in mine;

Half divine

Was the love of long ago.

Dawn's bright hues no longer glow,

And we watch, with fading sight,

Day turn night.

Sitting here at twilight's fall,

I recall

All our days of changing weather;

How we met black care together—

Fought him till he turned to fly,

You and I.



And the hours of glad content  
    We have spent!  
Perfect love and perfect life,  
We have run their round, sweet wife,  
    But of all those hours so blest,  
        This is best.

For at first, ah, well we knew  
    We were two,  
Loving, striving still to mingle,  
Yet how oft our wills were single;  
    Now our lives are almost done—  
        We are one!

## A CHILD'S QUESTIONS

These tears because he 's gone? You really care?  
Poor little woman with the rumpled hair,  
Look at the toys you 've scattered far and near,  
Play and forget him—he forgets, my dear.

He "loved you, too"? He "held you on his knee"?  
But I will hold you closer, darling, see!  
At eight years old such griefs soon pass away,  
And by to-morrow you 'll forget to-day.

"But why don't I cry, too, since he would go"?  
"Beneath your head what makes my heart beat so"?  
There comes a time when all one's tears are shed,  
The heart throbs out the agony instead.

You "do not understand"? Ah, well, my dear,  
Some day you 'll understand it, never fear;  
Poor woman-child, who yet these griefs must know,  
When tears come not, only the "heart beats so."

## TO MY DEAREST

Couldst thou choose, what wouldst thou,  
Babe on my breast,  
Strife for fame and glory,  
Dreaming that best?  
'T is the life of an ocean wave,  
Forever unrest.

A life of peace and quiet  
In some dim land,  
Where summer seas of azure  
Wash the warm strand?  
Such lives, like placid waters,  
All stagnant stand.

*TO MY DEAREST*

A life of love and passion,  
All strain and stress?  
Age comes, when one is left  
Chilled, comfortless,  
Unwarmed by the remembrance  
Of past caress.

Death, ere thou know life's anguish?  
Yea, that is best!  
Could I go with thee, dear,  
Both of us blest;  
But if that may not be,  
Stay on my breast!

## THE WORLD AND THE POET

The knight flung in the mire his cloak,  
To spare a queen's small feet;  
We deal in velvets for rewards  
When sovereigns walk the street.

The poet flung his cloak so that  
A clown might pass dry-shod,  
Forever stained his singing-robe  
To save a village clod!

## A LITTLE PARABLE

I made the cross myself whose weight  
Was later laid on me.  
This thought is torture as I toil  
Up life's steep Calvary.

To think mine own hands drove the nails!  
I sang a merry song,  
And chose the heaviest wood I had  
To build it firm and strong.

If I had guessed — if I had dreamed  
Its weight was meant for me,  
I should have made a lighter cross  
To bear up Calvary!

## SONG

When the land was white with moonlight,  
And the air was sweet with May,  
I was so glad that Love would last  
Forever and a day.

Now the fields are white in winter,  
And dead Love laid away;  
I am so glad Life cannot last  
Forever and a day,

## AT NIGHT-TIME

We soothe the child for some withholden pleasure,  
Till sweet eyes smile that were so fain to weep:  
"To-morrow—only wait until to-morrow,  
After you sleep."

So we are soothed with solemn dreams of heaven,  
When earthly days no further solace keep;  
Hope tells us there shall be a happy morrow  
After we sleep.



## DEATH AT DAYBREAK

I shall go out when the light comes in—  
There lie my cast-off form and face;  
I shall pass Dawn on her way to earth,  
As I seek for a path through space.

I shall go out when the light comes in;  
Would I might take one ray with me!  
It is blackest night between the worlds,  
And how is a soul to see?

## THE ETERNAL JUSTICE

Thank God that God shall judge my soul, not man!

I marvel when they say,

“Think of that awful Day

No pitying fellow-sinner’s eyes shall scan

With tolerance thy soul,

But His who knows the whole,

The God whom all men own is wholly just.”

Hold thou that last word dear,

And live untouched by fear.

He knows with what strange fires He mixed this dust.

The heritage of race,

The circumstance and place

Which make us what we are—were from His hand,

That left us, faint of voice,

Small margin for a choice.

He gave, I took: Shall I not fearless stand?

Hereditary bent  
That hedges in intent  
He knows, be sure, the God who shaped thy brain.  
He loves the souls he made;  
He knows his own hand laid  
On each the mark of some ancestral stain.  
Not souls severely white,  
But groping for more light,  
Are what Eternal Justice here demands.  
Fear not; He made thee dust.  
Cling to that sweet word—"Just."  
All 's well with thee if thou art in just hands.

JUN 25 1921